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Sarah D.

Mr. *Shower's* Sermon
OF
RESIGNATION
TO THE
Divine Will.

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RESIGNATION
TO THE
Divine Good Pleasure
In every Condition;

Recommended as our

DUTY and HAPPINESS

IN A
SERMON

From 2 SAM. XV. 26.

By JOHN SHOWER.

The Second Edition.

L O N D O N,
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Golden Lion in St. Paul's Church-yard, 1703.



A Letter to a Friend concerning
the following Sermon.

S I R,

I Have herewith sent you the Sermon you desired, and wish it may contribute any thing to promote that Resignation to the Will of God, wherein so much of our Duty and present Happiness consists. Nothing but the Seasonableness of the Subject can be a good Reason, or sufficient Motive to make it publick. But while we live in a troublesome and sinful World, and in an Age of Changes, it must needs be Seasonable. Could we meet all Events with a prepared Mind (which this Resignation will assist us to do,) good Men might find a more easie passage through all the Calamities and Sufferings of this life, to the Blessedness of another, than most of 'em do. It would establish us against all our Fears, and fix us under all Changes, and give us inward Peace in despite of the World: It would compose our Spirits, and quiet our Thoughts under the Vicissitudes of Human Affairs. It might be

*our Refuge in a Storm, our Ease in Trouble,
our Light in Darkness; and give us Manna in
a Wilderness, and Food in a Desert: It would
be an Helmet against the Approach of Evil, and
afford us Consolation under actual Sufferings:
And, 'twould furnish us with the truest Satis-
faction when we prosper in the World. We may
then be assured, that what seemeth Good is re-
ally so; was designed for our good by the Di-
vine Care, and conduceth to it by the Guidance
of his Infallible Counsel If you think the fol-
lowing Sermon may be of any use to such excel-
lent purposes, I pray God accompany it with
his Blessing. I am,*

Sir,

Your Affectionate Friend,

London,
April 10. 1684

and Humble Servant,

J. SHOWER.

*Resignation to the Divine good Plea-
sure in every Condition.*

2 SAM. XV. 26.

But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee,
*Behold here I am, let him do unto me as seem-
eth good unto him.*

THE particular Occasion of these words was the fears and distress of *David* by *Absalom's* Rebellion; an account whereof we have in the preceding Verses. It came to pass Ver. 7. after Forty years, that *Absalom*, who by various Artifices had gain'd the hearts of the people, begs leave of his Father to go to *Hebron*; for which he pretends Religion, and a Vow to the Lord, as the ground of his Request, and the Reason of his Departure. The most probable computation of these Forty years, is from the time when the *Israelites* first desired a King. *David* had now reigned Seven and Thirty years; to which, if we add the Three years of *Saul's* Reign, *viz.* One with *Samuel*, and Two alone, it answers to that number. With his Father's consent, he goes to *Hebron*, about Sixteen Miles from *Jeru-* Ver. 10. *salem*, the place of his own Nativity, and the Metropolis of *Juda*: The Father *there* began his Reign, and the Son designs *there* to begin his Rebellion. Two hundred of *David's* Household are persuaded to follow him thither in the simplicity of their

their hearts. Their absence from his Father might weaken his Party, and their presence with *Absalom* gain credit with the people, that 'twas by the King's Commission and Order he should assume the Government. The subtilty of *Achitophel* assisted very much to the contrivance and management of this and other Policies to the same purpose. The Conspiracy begins to be strong, and the number of Volunteers doth every day encrease. The love of novelty and change, with the Caresses of an handsome young Prince, and some contempt of *David's* Age, engag'd divers of the people to joyn in that Treason which an undutiful Son, and a disloyal Statesman had before contriv'd and hatcht. *David* being quickly inform'd of *Absalom's* design, and the strength of his growing Party, resolves to retreat from *Jerusalem*, to prepare for resistance, and prevent a threatned Ruine. *Ittai*, a Foreigner, with many of his own Subjects, and most of his Domestick Servants, testifie their love and duty by tears and lamentations, and accompany him over the Brook *Kidron*, towards the way of the Wilderness, between *Jerusalem* and *Jerico*. *Zadock* and *Abiathar*, the Priests, are desired by the King to return back to the City, with the *Ark* of God, being loath to hazard *that*, and those who attended it; or supposing they could do him more service by tarrying at *Jerusalem*: though 'tis most probable the removal of the *Ark* from *thence* was not a fault, as some imagine, because at that time it was not fixt to a certain place, as afterwards. But whatever were the Reason, he desires *the Ark* might be carried back: For, saith he, *if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and I shall see both it, and his holy habitation.* But if the Lord should say,

I have

I have no delight in thee, *Behold here I am, let him do to me what seemeth good unto him.*

He wholly refers himself to the issue of Divine Providence, professing his readiness to comply with the Will of God, whatsoever the event shall declare it to be. Now that *David's* Example may be a president to us for a calm Submission to the Divine good pleasure, amidst the many Casualties of human life, and our frequent disappointment thereby, I shall endeavour to show from these Words,

1. What is necessary to this Resignation of our selves in every thing to the Will of God.

2. What abundant Reason we have thus to refer our selves to God's dispose.

3. The Advantages and Benefits of doing so.

4. Improve it by some Inferences of Truth and Duty, which this Subject may suggest for our Instruction and Practice.

1. What is requisite to this intire Resignation of our selves to the Will of God. And there are some things necessary in reference to *God*, others which regard *our selves*, and other things which relate to the *affairs of this present life*, wherewith we shall have some concern during our abode on earth.

1. In relation to *God* 'tis requisite,

1. That we firmly believe his Being and Providence. We ought to be convinc't and satisfied, that there is a gracious Creator, and wise Governour of all things, in whose hands we are, and within the compass of whose care and providence are all his Works: That all the powers and abilities of Creatures are from him; that they execute his Will, perform his Pleasure, and are the instruments of his Decrees: and that it being his part to manage and direct, 'tis ours to submit

submit and acquiesce in his Government, and adore his Will. If we believe that his order or permission is concerned in every event, what should follow but a devotion of all to his choice, with an hearty well-pleasedness in the rank and station wherein God shall place us? An infinite God, ordering all the issues of time, we shall never have any Reason to distrust the care of his Providence, to question his Faithfulness, or dispute his Sovereignty, or impeach his Righteousness or Wisdom in any thing that befalls us. And if we can have no Reason for any of these, we may safely resign our selves to him in the words of *Psalm 47.4. the Church, Lord, thou shalt chuse our inheritance for us.*

By a Reflection on God as Creator and Governour of the World, we may argue our selves into this Resignation: "Did he make, and doth he govern the
 "Universe, and can he not order my affairs to the
 "best advantage? Hath exquisite Wisdom, Good-
 "ness, and Power, fram'd all things out of nothing,
 "and will he not rule all things which he hath made
 "in the best manner? Hath his Providence preserv'd
 "and guided his People in all Ages, and can he not
 "direct me? Is his Arm shortned, that he cannot de-
 "liver me, or his Understanding darkned, that he
 "knows not how? Hath he conducted so many Saints
 "to glory by an unerring Wisdom, and never-failing
 "Mercy, and can he possibly mistake the best way of
 "bringing me thither? From the belief and confide-
 ration of this merciful Providence of our Heavenly
 Father, we may leave it to him to chuse our Allow-
 ance, and dispose of us, and all our affairs, as it shall
 seem good in his sight.

2. 'Tis necessary that we often contemplate the
 Divine *Attributes* and *Promises*, which are proper to
 engage

engage our Resignation to his Will and dependance on his Word. We ought seriously to consider what a God he is, and what he can do for us, and how far he hath promised that he will; that in all the Emergencies of life he is able to give us suitable relief and help; that he knows all our needs, and how to supply them, and is willing to do so when 'tis most seasonable, and fittest to be done. Such an apprehension of his *Almighty Arm* is necessary, as may dispose us at once to trust him in a way of duty, and yet to despair of Success in an unlawful Undertaking. Such a believing consideration of his *Wisdom*, as will prevent our questioning, whether that be best which his holy Will declares to be so: and of his *Truth* and *Faithfulness*, as will strengthen our Faith in his Power, to extricate us out of every distress: Such a perswasion of his *Love* and *Kindness*, as will excite our gratitude, and preserve us from doubting of the good issue of what he shall please to order. Moreover, such a review of his *gracious Promises*, as may encourage our dependance on his word, That he will grant the desires of those that fear him, and be ever mindful of his Covenant. That his grace shall be sufficient for us. That all things shall work for good to them that love God. That we shall not be tempted above what we are able. That they that fear the Lord shall want nothing that is good. That in a publick storm he will be a Refuge and an hiding place to his people. That the rod of the wicked shall not always rest on the lot of the righteous. That the God of *Israel*, who is the Saviour thereof in the time of trouble, a God working Salvation in the midst of the Earth, can take the wicked in their own Craftiness, insnare them in the works of their own hands, make them

perish by their own counsels, and fall into the pits which they have digg'd for others; baffle their policies, prevent their designs, alter their purposes, blast their expectations, and defeat their Plots, and bring to light the hidden things of darkness: and save his people when no other arm can bring Salvation, &c. 'Tis necessary to believe that not only he *can*, but *will* accomplish what he hath promised; and His Attributes are the ground of our faith in this particular. For if any others do *will* our good, they may want *power* to effect it; but *Omnipotence* is here our security. They are *mutable*, and may recal their word, or alter their mind; but God's *Truth* is as invariable as his Power is infinite. Men may find a necessity to fail their promises, by reason of somewhat they did not foresee, (their knowledge being bounded as well as their strength;) but unsearchable Wisdom can never be mistaken. The most intricate Occurrences of time being open and naked from Eternity to the view of his Omniscience, no occasion can be supposed why God should not be faithful to his word. The consideration whereof will have a very great influence on this Resignation of our selves to his good pleasure.

2. Some things are necessary with respect to *our Selves*.

1. That we expect sufferings, troubles, and disappointments in the World. Religion will not exempt us from the ordinary Calamities of human life, to which every man is incident, tho we abstract from the consideration of the Gospel, and Conscience. What sensible Afflictions had *David* by his nearest Relations! how frequent occasions of sorrow did he meet with in the time of his Father-in-law *Saul*, from *Michal's* folly, and her Father's hatred! what breaches
in

in his Family, and divisions in his Kingdom afterwards! his Subjects revolt from their obedience, and his own Children are in the head of an Army against him. He is forc'd to make War against those whom he would not hurt. How smart an affliction in his *Tamar* and *Ammon*, and his beloved *Absalom*, during his whole Life, (one instance whereof the context relates) and at his death too: and after that, in the combination of his Son *Adonijah* with *Joab*, &c. And why should we expect to be exempted? Let us count upon it as our Lot and Portion, if we would be able, under actual sufferings, to resign and submit to the will of God. 2 Sam. 18. 22, 23.

As to the case of suffering for Conscience sake, we are bid to expect it, and have reason to prepare for it. 'Tis the voice of Heaven, That *through many tribulations we must enter into glory*. Christianity injoins us to look for persecution and the *Cross*: and hath made a Covenant of Sufferings, and promis'd blessings to it. Most of our graces are passive, and adapted to a suffering state; and as followers of the Captain of our Salvation, we must expect our share. But for the most part we are unwilling to hear of Calamities before they come; and then we cannot bear them, because they come *suddenly*. 'Tis the unexpectedness of the *Cross*, that is the subject matter of our complaints in the day of adversity. We think it irksom and unpleasant to forecast how the case would be, if God should try us in such or such an Instance, if he should call for such a blessing we value, snatch from us such a Relation whom we tenderly love, or frustrate our designs and hopes in such a particular; and therefore we will not consider it before hand, and then the Surprizal adds a sting to the Calamity. For

no kind of evils are so amazing and terrible, as those which are unexpected: The suddenness of them deprives us of that stayedness of mind which is requisite to a due deportment under such a tryal. And our passions then transport us into many indecent Excesses, and make us foam with impatient Murmurs, and cast up mire and dirt.

2. Let us always maintain an humble penitent sense of Sin, and our own Unworthiness. This is necessary, because Pride will indispose us for submission to the Divine Will. And if we joyn Impenitence, 'twill make us contend with the Almighty; overlook his Goodness, despise his Wisdom, distrust his Faithfulness, and find faults with his Providence, as if things could be better ordered than they are by God's management. Whereas an humble Soul, sensible of the desert of sin, thinks every condition good enough, and so is willing to be at God's dispose. 'Lord (will such a man say, with admiring thoughts of the divine goodness and bounty) what can be too little for me, who am less than the least of all thy mercies? What temporal Calamities too severe, when I deserve eternal? What condition too low that is on this side the bottomless pit? What cup too bitter, where thy wrath, and remediless despair, are none of the Ingredients? Am I not thy Creature, and mayest thou not do what thou wilt *with thy own*? Have I not provok't thee, and shall I not receive Correction? Have I merited damnation, and can I be wronged and injur'd by a temporal Sorrow? What are gentle Rods to fiery Scorpions? And the light and momentary Afflictions of this life, to the agonies and torments of an eternal *Tophet*? Oh pardon me now, and save me

'me at last, and do with me what seemeth good in
'thy sight. Deny me not an entrance into *Hea-*
'*ven*, and let thy will be done upon *Earth*.

This is the proper Language of an humble Penitent, referring himself to the divine Choice, as to every thing in this World.

3. Some things are necessary *respecting the Affairs of this present world.*

1. That we have right notions of *Prosperity* and *Adversity*, of temporal good and evil. For according to the Judgment we make of these, will our Passions be exercis'd: We ought therefore to endeavour, to understand what is their due Value, and what estimate in Reason we should make of them: We ought to consider, as to Temporal Good, That it is fleeting and inconstant, uncertain and temporal; may be lost on a sudden, and must be left shortly; that no outward advantages above others, do on that account recommend us to God, or intitle us to his favour; That 'tis no Argument of his displeasure, to be poor and despised, to be afflicted and calamitous; that *bread is not* Ecl. 9. 11,
alway to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, but time and chance happens to them all: That all things under the Sun are mutable, and 'tis a madness to think they will never change: That 'tis necessary God should make a difference and variety in the conditions of men, that some should be rich, and others poor, because neither could subsist without both: The meanness of some is no less needful to the order and harmony of the World, than the greatness and abundance of others: the Rich cannot live comfortably without the Poor, nor the latter be supported without the former. Besides, 'tis to be considered, That a prosperous condition, without God's blessing to improve

prove it, will but administer to our sin, increase our guilt, and advance our ruin: That an abundance of Temporal Enjoyments is attended with many dangerous temptations; and very few perish by *Famine*, in comparison with those many who die of a *Surfeit*; That there is no Temporal evil but God can support us under, and sanctifie for our good; That the loss of life is the utmost we can fear; and having the promises of a future Blessedness, that is not to be dreaded: And if our lives are spared, we can only be deprived a little sooner of those comforts which otherwise we must relinquish when we quit the body: And suppose the worst that can possibly befall us, the time of its continuance cannot be long; within a few years, suppose *Thirty*, or *Forty*, and hardly that number of the greatest Assembly shall then be left alive: And after this life we shall meet with no disappointment evermore to trouble us; no cross Providence to try our patience, or require our Submission; no sudden loss or casualty to be the matter of a Complaint; no publick Storm, or private Adversity to discompose us. And having this hope in us, as to *the other life*, for shame let us Resign all things to the Will of God, as to *this*. And if we consider our selves either as Men or Christians, the calamities and sufferings to which we are exposed are so many, that 'tis a merciful dispensation our Lease is shortned, and the number of our sorrowful days on Earth diminisht; that whereas our Fore-fathers were train'd up in the School of the Cross for many hundred years, we are not to live so long, but may hope to get to *Heaven* sooner; and *there only* remains a Rest for the people of God.

2. 'Tis necessary that we mortifie our love to this World, and moderate our Affections to earthly things. Love seems to be the measure and Origine of all other Passions: And if this present World, and its enjoyments, be inordinately lov'd, we shall be apt to repine or despond when evil befalls us. Our sorrow for the loss of outward blessings, will hold proportion with our fond Affection, while we possess'd them; and our dejection under Calamity be proportion'd to our fears, lest it come to pass: Whereas if our Affections be moderate, and guided by Faith and Reason, we shall not be much concern'd at the evils we must suffer: we shall not much trouble our selves for the want of that which we neither value nor love, but within the limits prescribed us by God: For what we embrace with the greatest fondness, that we part from with the greatest regret. And as many ways may we be *miserable*, as there are variety of Accidents to separate us from what we *inordinately love*. This is the great Reason why the calamities we suffer, dissolve our patience, and rob us of our peace; Because we love this World too well, and are over-fond of that which we may easily lose. And how quickly may that man be miserable, if there be so many Worms can make that Gourd wither, which he sits under the shadow of, with inordinate satisfaction? Nay, *with* Temporal Enjoyments, or *without* them, we can never be at rest, if we love them too well; for all our days we are either perplext with *fear*, lest they should be lost, or with *sorrow* in case they are. If we love any thing very much, besides God, 'tis seldom but we meet with occasions for as great a Sorrow as we entertain the Object with an undue Affection: But loving God above all, and every thing else only accord-

according to his prescription, would make us willing to be at his Dispose, and content with his Order : What pleaseth him cannot then displease us ; and what is according to his mind, cannot contradict ours. And so we may speak it from our hearts, *let him do unto us as seemeth good unto him.*

2. Let us consider what abundant Reason we have thus to refer our selves to God's dispose :

1. Upon the account of our *Profession.*
2. Our *Duty.*
3. Our *Interest.*

1. Upon the account of our *Profession.* We own our selves the Disciples and Followers of the Holy Jesus, who as he chearfully performed, so he patiently submitted to the Will of his Father, declaring his Resignation under his sharpest Conflicts ; *Father, not my will, but thine be done.* And as we are Redeemed by his Death, and are the price of his Blood, we are obliged by his Example. We profess to follow him as the Captain of our Salvation, and ought to remember he was the most glorious instance of submission and patience, of trust in God, and resignation to his Will, that ever the World was acquainted with. As his Victory should be our Encouragement, Mat. 26. 39. his Example must be our Pattern : Heb. 2. 10. As *he was perfected by sufferings*, and stoop'd to the severest ones, to purchase glory for us, we are directed to expect our Heb. 12. 3. share, to prepare us to partake of that glory. To *consider him who endur'd the contradiction of sinners against himself*, is propounded as an expedient against *fainting in our minds* : And so it may prove, if in Imitation of him, we are satisfied in every thing with the Will of our Father. We call God *Father*, and own our

our selves his *Children* ; and shall we not be content he should chuse our Allowance, and dispose of our Conditions ? We pray that *his will may be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven* ; and shall we be displeased that our Prayers are answered, and that he doth as we desire him, that is, *what seemeth good in his sight* ? The blessed Spirits above, flee wheresoever they are sent, chearfully obey his Will, and execute his Pleasure ; and shall not *we* be satisfied with his Government, and pleased with his Orders, and *drink of that* Joh. 8. 11. *Cup which our heavenly Father gives us to drink* ? Certainly we may trust his *Wisdom*, because he is *God* ; and his *Love* and *Faithfulness*, because he is a *Father*, who knowing what is best for us, will do nothing but what really is so. We know that every Commission concerning the Events of time, is signed by our Father's own hand ; and do we think he will set his hand to what is really to the prejudice of his own Children, whom he tenderly loves ? What we shall eat and drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed, where we shall lodge, and what we shall do and be, and how in every thing we shall be disposed of, are things that belong to his Paternal Government to order ; and obedient Children will leave it to their Father's Care, and acquiesce in his Choice.

2. Upon the account of *Duty*.

1. In *Gratitude* for his abundant Kindness, whereof we have had already such large Experience.

He formed us in the Womb, and brought us into light, with our intire senses and integral parts: He dispos'd of us in our Infancy, educated our Childhood, and guided our Youth, and hath compassed us about with Mercy on every side: The streams of his Fountain have continually refresh't us: And shall we over-

look the innumerable Instances of his past kindness, by not trusting him for the future?

We cannot fully display his Benefits, their wonderful Greatness, or undeserved Freeness, their excessive Multitude, and large Extent; their Suitableness, and Seasonableness, their Convenience, and Duration, &c. Our Imaginations cannot conceive the Dimensions of his Goodness, nor our Speech utter them; such as the advantages of our Education, the protection of his Providence, the provisions of his Bounty, the restraints of his Grace, the privilege of his Gospel, and the assistance of his Holy Spirit: His goodness to our Bodies, and to our Souls; to our Friends and Relatives, in all the places wherever we have liv'd, and in all the portions of our time hitherto: Some Blessings immediately from God, and others from such Instruments to whom God gave the Will and the Power, the Capacity and the Opportunity, and Inclination of doing us good. How many hazards that we thought inevitable, hath he rescu'd us from? How many difficulties that we thought insuperable, hath his Wisdom and Power enabled us to wade through and conquer? From how many surprising Casualties hath he secur'd us? From how many Maladies, and infectious Diseases hath he preserv'd us? How many unobserv'd Dangers hath his Care prevented? How many of our Fears hath he deliver'd us from? How many of our Doubts hath he wisely resolved? How many of our Prayers hath he graciously answer'd? He hath given us Ease and Health, rais'd us from Sicknes, and pluckt us often from the Jaws of Death: Have we met with Affliction? we have either had present Support, or speedy Deliverance; he hath either diverted the Calamity, or given us strength to bear it: He hath known
our

our Souls in the Day of Adversity, and succour'd us from fainting in the Hour of Distress. And if the Rod were not presently remov'd, he increas'd our Patience, and sanctified the Visitation, and in the issue *'twas good that we were afflicted*. Moreover, no affliction we have been under, but had many concomitant Mercies: (unmixed misery is only the Portion of Hell, as perfect Bliss the state of Heaven.) And why *should we not receive some evil at the hand of God, as well as good?* Especially considering the vast disproportion. Job 2. 10. For how *many* Blessings have we received to *one* Adversity? When some Mercies are *taken*, are not others *left*, of the same or greater Consequence? Have you lost *part* of your Estate? did not God give the *whole*; and doth not he continue *Health*, without which you could not enjoy *any* of it? Are *some* of your Relations snatcht away by Death? doth not God continue or raise up *Others* in their room? Therefore in the day of *Adversity* consider, as well as in the day of *Prosperity* rejoyce, for *God hath set the one* Ecc. 7. 14. *over against the other*. If then he should deprive us of what we *now* have, we ought to be thankful we had it so long, and content, if we injoy it no longer; and consequently be willing he should do with us *what seemeth good unto him*. The greatest *Evils* we can now suffer, are consistent with his Favour, which is our *chiefest Good*; and the Good we have receiv'd already, is more and greater than the Evils we have felt or fear. And have we tasted so much of his Bounty, and shall we quarrel at a change of Providence? What Condition have we ever pass'd through, but the present Mercies of that Condition, would more than counterpoise the Calamities and Sorrows of it? The Measures of God's Grace, say the *Jewish Rabbins*, is lar-

ger than the Measures of his Judgment. For one Cross we have many Blessings. Have you not the Love of God, the Testimony of a good Conscience, the Influence of the Holy Spirit, the Ministry of Angels, the Promises of the Gospel, and the Hopes of Glory? These you have kept, or might have kept, notwithstanding all your Afflictions. After such Reflections as these, can we reasonably suppose, that there will ever be any just ground of Dissatisfaction in God's disposal? Ever any reason for us to quarrel with his Providences, and be displeased with what he doth? *He hath done us good and not evil, all our days hitherto;* and are we loth to be guided by so Gracious a Father? Are we unwilling to be disposed of by so good a God?

2. We ought in *Duty* to resign to his Will, if he had not thus oblig'd us by his Benefits, because we are his *Creatures*, and owe him Subjection, and because by our many Sins we deserve his Wrath. He hath an undoubted right to order us by his Providence, as well as govern us by his Law. And 'tis a vile Contempt of the Authority and Wisdom of our *Absolute Sovereign*, to dispute his Will. We cannot suffer any Evil of Affliction but what is of his sending. Poverty as well as Riches is his Gift. *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken, blessed be his holy name. The rich and the poor meet together, the Lord is maker of them both* I was dumb and opened not my mouth, because thou, O Lord, didst it, saith David. *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth good unto him,* saith Eli. We owe Obedience to all the Instances of his declared Will. And when we see his Hand at the bottom of the Warrant, silent Submission becomes us, as we are his *Creatures*; especially considering that we have provok'd

provok'd him, and deserve his Wrath; that all the Good we receive is undeserved, but none of the Evil we suffer is so. We cannot challenge his Favour, or merit his Love; and therefore should be thankful for every Mercy. We cannot but confess, that we deserve his Judgments, and therefore should humbly submit to every Affliction: *Shall we not bear the Indignation of the Lord, having sinn'd against him?* Mic. 7. 9. *Shall we not accept the punishment of our Iniquities,* Lev. 26. 41. especially when 'tis *less than our Sins deserve?* Hath God Ezra 9. 13. removed *any one* Comfort we did not forfeit? Doth he inflict *any one* Calamity we did not merit? And ought we not with Thankfulness to acknowledge his Mercy, and with intire Submission resign unto his good pleasure?

3. Upon the account of *Interest*. We are not only obliged to this *Resignation* of our selves to the Will of God, in duty to him, but for our own Interest and Convenience. Because,

God knows better what is good for us, than we can possibly do our selves.

2. Because having resign'd all to his Will, the worst that can befall us will be really for our good.

1. God knows better what is good for us, than we can possibly do our selves. We think that to be evil which God brings about for good. From the finiteness of our Nature, and the feebleness of our Reason, we can't view the full Circuit of his Providence, or discern the gracious Design in every dispensation, which he infallibly carries on, and will at length discover. We have nevertheless the highest Reason to adore his Will, and hold the general Conclusion, that *whatever he doth is best, and 'twill be beautiful in its season.* Ecc. 3. 11. 'Tis therefore our Interest to

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Eccl. 6. 12. refer our selves to him ; *For man knoweth not what is good for himself in this life.* God, like a wise Physician, may consult our Health, when he doth not gratifie and please our Palates: He may deny us in some Particulars, to grant us in others, which will be more for our Advantage: He may contradict our Designs and Wishes, to secure our greater good. How many men who have waited for a Wind, and miss'd it, have fretted and disquieted themselves, for being occasionally absent when the Ship set Sail, who soon after have thank't the Providence of God for preserving their Lives by so cross an Accident; when they heard that the Ship perisht in the Voyage, and all the Men were drown'd?

We know not how much God may *befriend* us, when we think he acts like an *Enemy*. As he gives us many things by his Providence for our good, which we afterwards find to be so, but would not have chosen; so he takes away many, with the same Design, which we are loth to part with. God may take away one Blessing which we prize, to substitute another in the room of it, that is much superior. So that were we offer'd our Choice, what we would have, we could not do wiser than to put the Choice to him again, and desire him to chuse for us: For we behold not the Series of good or evil Consequences, which would follow upon our Wishes, if they should be granted. That may be good on a naked prospect, which a Series of depending Events may turn to evil: And so on the contrary. But God who holdeth the Chain of all Causes in his view, seeth what Reference one part hath to another, and so orders all as may best attain his great Design, and our truest Interest. *Jacob* understood not till afterwards, that the loss of *Joseph* was

was the means of his Advancement to the Throne of *Egypt*, and the preservation of his Family in a Famine, the intended Issue. His Brethren sold him for a Slave, that he might not become their Master: And by that very means it came to pass, that *their sheaves bowed down to his*, according to his Dream. We only take notice of what is good *at present*, but know not what would be so for the *remainder* of our Lives: but God can order things so, as to be for our greater and more lasting good. And hereafter we shall find, that what now afflicts us, was a real Kindness and Advantage. Even those barren Women in *Jerusalem*, who long'd to become joyful Mothers, and *for want of children, would not be comforted*; when *Titus* sackt the City, and the Inhabitants were destroy'd by Fire, Sword, Famine, and all sorts of Calamities, they then found the words of our Saviour to be true, *Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps that never gave suck.*

Besides, we know not what is best for us, as we stand related to Others, and in reference to the *Publick*. The publick good of Mankind may be promoted, by our private inconvenience and loss; and of that, God is the best Judge. We are troubled at the frustration of our Endeavours and Hopes, as to some Instances, when that Disappointment may conduce to the publick Advantage, because we should but have got into the room and place of our Betters, who are of greater use and service to the common Interest of Christianity, and the general good of the World. And should we have our Wills in one particular against the Purpose of God; it may be, it would cross the Designs of God in a thousand others: For *great things may depend upon that, which we would have to be otherwise*

otherwise than it is. Lastly, God only knows what is best for us in order to our Eternal Happiness. All men would chuse to be prosperous in the World; but how many thousands would perish, and be undone, if they were so? Riches may impoverish and ruin us; Health and strength may weaken and undo us; and that which we desire and chuse, may prove a Curse and a Snare, an Inducement to sin, and shut us out of Heaven. We know not how we could grapple with the temptations of an higher condition. All Men cannot carry a full Cup without spilling, or be advanc'd very high but their Heads will turn round. We discern not those many Instances wherein our Temporal Interest would contradict our Eternal; where our present Satisfaction would be inconsistent with our future Blessedness. But since God doth, 'tis our Interest in all things to resign to his dispose. And the rather, because,

2. Having resign'd our selves to the Will of God, the *Worst* that can befall us will be really for our *Good*. God doth never afflict willingly, or in vain, but in great faithfulness to us, and for excellent purposes; never without a *just cause* on our part, and a *gracious design* on his. He can no more do an unwise act than an unholy one, being infinite in Wisdom as well as in Purity. He intends us *good* by all, and hath promised *that* shall be the issue. He hath put Losses and Calamities, Afflictions and Death it self (the Death of others, as well as our own) into the *Covenant of Grace*: they are all compriz'd within a Promise, and *shall work for good*. All the *Evil* God at any time inflicts on his Children is only another method of doing them *good*: That *by suffering in the Flesh we may cease from Sin*: That when our *Hearts are melted*

Rom. 8. 28.
1 Cor. 3.
21, 22.

melted like Wax, we may be capable of Divine Impressions: That he may *open our Ears to Discipline by the voice of his Rod*: Check our Pride, and humble us at his Foot; prevent our Security and cure our Earthly-mindedness; perfect our Patience, beautify our Faith, and repair our inward Vigor; imbitter this World, to raise us above it, to take us off from our false Hopes, and carnal Dependences; to awaken our sleepy Consciences, and revive a Spirit of Prayer, &c. And the Wisdom of God doth oftentimes suit our Necessities in these Particulars, by the kind, and season of the Affliction. And *Blessed* are those Sufferings, which bring us more into a Conformity to his Holy Image. Happy are those *Depressions* to the *Earth*, which afterwards *lift* us nearer *Heaven*. Those *Sighs* and *Groans* are matter of *Joy*, whose *Eccho* is a more holy and circumspect Life. And welcome should be that *Evil*, which thus effects our greatest *Good*. God, the great Physitian of Souls, can *Cure the Plague of the Heart* by a bodily *Disease*; and make one troublesome Distemper more effectual than many Sermons. He can teach us such Lessons from the House of Mourning, as we should never have learnt in the House of Feasting. Yea, he doth sometimes cause his *Rod* to be a *Staff* of Comfort, and give the *sweetest inward Peace* to his People, through Streams of *Bitterness*. For some never read the Love of God so legibly as under the darkest Cloud of outward Distress: As the Ark was *nearest Heaven* when the Waters of the Flood were *highest*. Besides, is it not our Advantage, if he will prove our Sincerity, and exercise our Grace, by a Change of Providence? To see whether we can love him as a *Father*, while we feel his Rod; whether we can believe the Truth of

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his Promise, when Humane Succors fail ; whether we can derive our Support from his Covenant-Love, when we have little else to depend upon ; whether we can live upon the *Fountain*, when the Streams are cut off and the Cisterns fail. Now if this be the merciful Design of Heaven, in the *Worst* that can befall us, we are Traitors to our own *Interest*, not to Resign our selves intirely to him. But this will lead me to the 3^d Particular, to

3. Consider the *Advantages* and *Benefits* of this *Resignation* of our selves to the Divine good Pleasure. And they are such as follow.

It will very much prepare us to receive without Murmuring the smartest Correction, and qualify us humbly to improve the severest Strokes ; Still *encouraging our selves in the Lord our God*, to whom we have surrendered our selves and the management of all our Affairs.

It will fit us for Prayer, and dispose us to a Spiritual Communion with God therein. For without such a Temper, no Prayer, respecting the things of this Life, can be acceptable to God.

It will prevent our making use of unlawful Means to avoid any feared Evil, or to extricate our selves from any present Difficulty, because God can bring about Good by seeming Evil. He can *make the Earth to help the Woman*, and accomplish his gracious Designs by what seems to oppose them.

It will suppress an undue *Inquisitiveness after things future* : And keep us from making use of any irregular or suspected Methods, to be inform'd of what shall come to pass. For keeping within the Bounds prescrib'd us by God, and managing our Affairs with the best Discretion we can, we may be very
well

well satisfied, by referring the Success and Issue to a Divine Conduct.

It will take us off from blaming Second Causes, and fretting against *Instruments* under Afflictions, and will make us look higher, to that Hand of Providence which manages the Rod, and hath wisely appointed it.

It will assist us to *glorify God in the Fire*, acknowledging his Supremacy, and subscribing to his Wisdom, and believing his Faithfulness; and thereby satisfying our Minds, that if Losses and Disappointments, Poverty or Tribulation, or any other Calamity, be God's appointment, *that is best*. If to be crost in our Desires, deceiv'd in our Expectations, depriv'd of our Friends, Goods, or Reputation, be the Will of God, that is *altogether best*. From such a Temper we may
' be able to say, *Lord here I am*, ready for any Service,
' prepared for any Suffering, girt for any Encounter,
' resolv'd for any Difficulty, and satisfied with what-
' soever thou shalt please to order. Lead me to the
' Right-hand or to the Left: Lift me up, or cast me
' down: *Do unto me what seemeth good in thy sight*. I
' submit to thy Direction: I am thine, and at thy dis-
' pose, and resolve to follow thee without disputing
' thy Pleasure. If thy *Will* be such, and thy *Wisdom*
' advise it, Poverty is better than Riches, Disgrace
' than Honour, a Prison than Liberty, Losses than Pos-
' session, Missing more eligible than Obtaining, Fru-
' stration a greater Kindness than Success, and a
' Tempest more desirable than a Sun-shine. Such a
Temper as this will *secure the Peace of our Minds*, and
consequently our Happiness in every Condition. For
our Desires and Choice being subjected to the Will of
God, *our own Wills* may be said to be *done*, when *his*
is so. Then only may we have whatsoever we will,

when we *will* nothing but what God will give, and are pleased with every thing which he thinks fit. Let the Weather be fair or fowl, let the World smile or frown upon us, by such a frame of Heart, we may commend our selves to the Blessing of God, with an humble Boldness invoke his Aid, and with a Christian Confidence wait the Execution of his Purposes, and expect the Performance of his Promises.

From the preceding Discourse we may learn divers things, for our *Instruction* and *Practice*. As

1. This may instruct us in the *true Reason* of Mens distracting *Fears* concerning future Events, and their *despondency* of Mind under actual Difficulties, *viz.* the *want of Resignation to the Will of God*.

1. *From thence arise our distracting Fears concerning Future Events.* For did we upon a sound belief of the Nature and Word of God, resign our selves to him, we should *not be afraid of evil Tidings*, or disquiet our Minds by the Apprehension of approaching Evil. God hath secur'd us of all *necessary good*, by his Promise, *That there shall be no lack to them who fear the Lord; That Bread shall be given them, and their Water shall be sure.* And no such Case can we imagine, wherein God by his Wisdom and Power cannot send us Relief, wherein his Presence cannot give us Support and Joy; or any thing fall out, but according to his wise Counsel, to whom we have resign'd our selves.

2. 'Tis the *want of Resignation, is the ground of our Despondency and dejection of Mind under actual Sufferings, and present Difficulties.* When any thing happens contrary to our Desires, how unreasonably do we repine against God, and torment our selves? send out our Complaints against Heaven, and fret against the Governor

Governor of the World; or sit down in Despondency, as if there were *no Hope*, and *no Sorrow* were ever *like ours*? Which is a base Reflection on the *Providence* of God, an Affront to his *Sovereignty*, a Disparagement of his *Wisdom*, the Reproach of his *Goodness*, and the Dishonor of his *Truth*. And such a Temper is not only *Sinful*, but *Unreasonable* and *Vain*, 'tis both absurd, and fruitless. For it not only implies great *Unthankfulness* for our present Mercies, and supposes the *Preference of our own Wishes*, before *God's Appointment*, (as if the Wisdom of God were to be advised by our foolish Fancies.) But it supposeth an Impossibility that things should ever be otherwise, or that any Remedy or Relief should ever be found out for the Evils we suffer. Whereas that Wheel of Providence whereby we are now at the bottom, may at the next turn, raise us up, and surprize us by unexpected Favours. We know not what Blessings God designeth us, what Mercies are teeming in the Womb of Futurity for us. 'Tis *unreasonable* to suppose, when we are in Adversity, that things will never alter; and 'tis *in vain* to torment our selves, if they do not. For God's Counsels shall stand, and his Will take place, whether we are *willing* or *unwilling*. Tho' the Birds may flutter, and be impatient of Confinement, he that carryeth the Cage in his Hand will go never the slower.

2. Should we Resign our selves to the Divine good Pleasure? *We ought not then over-cagerly to desire, and pursue any Temporal Good; or be over-earnest and positive in deprecating any Temporal Evil.* If God grant us the Blessings we wish for, let us praise his Name by the Acknowledgment of his Bounty; but if he think good to deny us, we must sit down with submissive Satisfaction

faction without them; not envying those who have more than we, as believing *we have a goodly Heritage, and that the Lines are fallen to us in a place sufficiently pleasant*, because by God's Direction. We should not set our Hearts so much on any Earthly Design, as not to be satisfied, if we meet with Disappointment; nor on any outward Blessing, so as not to be content, to lose it when God shall think it fit. Let us do what we can, and what we ought, and yet leave God to do *what seemeth good to him*. For we dare not deliberately wish, for a total Exemption from Calamity and Sorrow in this World. What if God say to any of us, Since you are unwilling to submit to my Conduct, and refuse to trust to the Care of my Providence, since my Wisdom, Power, Goodness and Truth, are not thought a sufficient Security; I'll cross thy Desires no more for the future, in every thing thou shalt have thy Choice: but beware the Event, &c. The miserable Case of such a Person, thus left in the Hands of his own Counsel, may convince us of our Error.

3. Should we Resign our selves intirely to the Divine good Pleasure? *Let us then undertake nothing of any Moment or Consequence, without imploring his Direction to guide us, and his Blessing to succeed our Undertaking.*

'Tis common for Men to ask Counsel of God, when they are firmly resolved what to do themselves. But we ought to have recourse to God for Advice, before we are determin'd in our own Thoughts, and not lay the Plot of our own Affairs, as to what we intend to do, and then suffer God to come in, *only* as the Executor of our Wills. Our Resignation to the Will of God would teach us, to ask *Counsel* from Heaven, as well as *Success*.

4. *This*

4. *This may instruct us in the Unlawfulness of anxious prying into Futurity, and dissuade us from it.* Let us mind what God will have us to do, and refer our selves to his Good Pleasure, and we neither need, or shall, be over-solicitous what he will do with us. *Our Times and Ways are in the Hand of God*; and in much Wisdom and Mercy hath he hidden future Events, to prevent the confident *Presumption* of some, and the melancholy *Despair* of others, by the certain Foreknowledge of what will come to pass: That we may live by Faith, depending on his Word and Promise, and be resign'd to his Will. 'Tis true, that some have tried to mend *their own Fortunes*, by telling *these* of other Men, pretending that every Man's Temper and Condition is legible in the Planets, and the future Events of Persons and Kingdoms may be known by the Stars; but such may be confuted and reprov'd, by the Challenge of God by the Prophet *Isaiah*, when he foretold the Destruction of *Babylon*; *Evil shall* ^{Isa. 47. 10,} *come upon thee and thou shalt not know from whence* ^{11, 12, 13,} *it riseth: and Mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt* ^{14.} *not be able to put it off: and Desolation shall come upon thee, which thou shalt not know.* Stand now with thine *Inchantments*, and the multitude of thy *Sorceries*; if so be thou mayest be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. Let now the *Astrologers*, the *Star-gazers*, the *Monthly Prognosticators* stand up, and save thee from the things that shall come upon thee. Behold, they shall be as *Stubble*, &c. If we love to be concern'd about Futurity, and will be prying into things to come, let our Solicitude be imployed about our Everlasting State, what will become of our Souls for ever, but let us resign our selves to the Will of God, as to all our Temporal Affairs.

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We see then upon the whole, what is our *Duty*, and where is our *Happiness*. And thanks be to God, who hath graciously connected them together, that by complying with the *former*, we may most effectually secure the *latter*. We are apt to think, we can never be happy till our Desires are granted; but the Remedy must be by the change of our Minds, and not of God's Providence: For an humble Resignation to his Pleasure, with a Satisfaction in his Choice, would settle the Peace of our Minds, and silence all our Complaints: Knowing that God hath an undoubted right to do with us what he pleaseth, because of his *Sovereignty*; and a fitness to rule us for our good, because of his *infinite Wisdom*; and that he will most certainly do so, from his *Mercy* and *Truth*. Let his Promises be our Refuge, and his Providence our Comfort; his Wisdom our Satisfaction, and his Almighty Power our Encouragement and Support; his Mercy our only Treasure, and the Secret of his Presence our Pavilion: Chearfully referring all things to his Management, stedfastly depending on him in every strait or Difficulty, practically acknowledging him in every Dispensation of his Providence, and quietly submitting to whatsoever he shall order: for *he can do nothing but what is Best, because he himself is infinitely Wise, and infinitely Good*. And were we well in our Wits, we could desire nothing but what is *Best*; and of that God only can judge, and of that we are fully assured, in every Condition.

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